

A CHAPTER OF CONFEDERATE HISTORY.

THERE have always been those among the people of the Southern States who believed that not the preponderance of the North in population and resources wrought the downfall of the Southern Confederacy, nor yet any want on our part of constancy or fidelity. They are convinced that the South had resources, courage, and patriotism sufficient to command success under better leadership; they are persuaded that there were special causes of failure extrinsic to the people themselves; and they think it is but just and fair that any facts which go to sustain that theory of our fall should be given to the world. Such facts, as to a most vital part of our military organization, I am now about to offer.

From the beginning of the war I was in the Subsistence Department, and was honored by the personal regard and confidence of Colonel Northrop, the Commissary-General, during his whole term of service. Hence I had an opportunity of knowing as much as any one could know of the actual working of the Bureau, and of judging not only what it might have done, but what it was hindered from doing, by the intermeddling of those who had or claimed the right to control the actions of the Commissary-General. And I affirm that at the head of this harmful class, but acting mainly through the Secretaries of War and the Treasury, was the President himself.

Against such high authority a mere subaltern, as I was, could do nothing but note, and deplore, and chafe, until an occasion for action should arise. At last Mr. Davis made one. On November 1, 1864, he applied to the Commissary-General to know if his magazines were increasing or diminishing. The reply showed an "alarming state of the commissariat." Nevertheless, on November 7, Mr. Davis in his annual message writes: "It is gratifying to assure you that the military supplies essentially requisite for public defense will be found, as heretofore, adequate to our

needs." Inasmuch as this direct contradiction of the facts might have been intended only to mislead the enemy, I took no further action upon it at that time than to send him documents showing the true condition of the commissariat. Two months passed, and Mr. Davis seemed still resolved to keep Congress in ignorance of the crisis in subsistence and the imminent danger of general collapse. I now determined to act; and seeking my friend, the late Colonel John B. Baldwin, of the Confederate House of Representatives, I suggested that he should invite such members of the House as he might choose to an informal meeting, at which I, with Major French of the Commissary Department, would communicate the information that was withheld. The result of that meeting was seen the following day, when, in secret session of both Houses, it was unanimously resolved to appoint a joint select committee, to investigate the condition and management of all the bureaus of the War Department. At the session of the committee for the investigation of the Subsistence Bureau, held January 23, 1865, I was the principal, though not the only, witness—Major Seth Barton French and Major B. P. Noland testifying to important facts and confirming my testimony. The substance of this testimony was written out by me at the request of the committee, immediately after it was given. The paper, as it was presented to the joint committee, I still retain, or rather a copy of it, for the identical paper is lost, having been probably abstracted from the archives of the Virginia Historical Society, in which it was deposited by me. It is reproduced below, with such abbreviations and omissions of the less essential points as are requisite to bring it within the compass of a magazine article: but in all other respects the original form of the document is retained.

In January, 1862, by order of the Commissary-General, I made to a committee of the House of Representatives a report on the administration of the Bureau of Subsistence, in which the following occurs:

"In the packing season of 1860-61 upwards of three million head of hogs were packed at the various porkeries of the United States, beside those packed by farmers at home, of which less than twenty thousand were packed at regular establishments south of the lines of our armies. Of the whole number, experts estimate that the product of about one million two hundred thousand

hogs was imported in the early part of last year from beyond our present lines into what is now the Southern Confederacy. Of this number, it is estimated that about three hundred thousand hogs, in their bacon equivalent, have been consumed by our armies since the commencement of hostilities. Tennessee then became the main reliance, which, together with the accessible portions of Kentucky, had been so ravaged by hog-cholera and injured by short corn crops for three years preceding the year just closed, that the number slaughtered at the porkeries, within their limits, had dwindled from two hundred thousand head to less than twenty thousand. It was into this field that this department had to enter as a purchaser, dubious of a sufficiency, but assured of a heavy and active competition."

Shortly thereafter, the successive captures of Forts Donelson and Henry caused a considerable portion of these supplies to be lost; the subsequent campaign lost us Kentucky and much of Tennessee, and left us very ill-provided with meat.

In October, 1862, an offer was made by an entirely responsible party to supply the department with "ten thousand hogsheads of bacon certainly, and probably twenty thousand more hogsheads." His letter insists on the importance of speedy action; alleges that there was enough cotton (which he offered to take in payment) to feed and clothe our armies, in a section tributary to Memphis, which city was then, and had been for some time previous, in the secure possession of the enemy. Unless disposed of in this way, the cotton would probably have to be destroyed to prevent its falling into the hands of the enemy; but the owners, though willing to let the Government have their crops, were opposed to having them destroyed. The offer was forwarded by the Commissary-General to the Secretary of War, the Hon. G. W. Randolph, with an urgent request for authority to accept it. Mr. Randolph forwarded the document to the President, accompanying it with a letter, in which he says that "the alternative is presented of violating our policy of withholding cotton from the enemy, or risking the starvation of our armies." He advised that the Commissary-General should be authorized to contract for bacon and salt, limiting the amount of purchase to what was absolutely necessary to feed the army and supply it with blankets and shoes.

Upon that letter the President made the following indorsement:

"**SECRETARY OF WAR:** Is there necessity for immediate action? Is there satisfactory evidence that the present opportunity is the last which will be offered? Have you noted the scheme of the enemy for the payment of their

next accruing interest on their public debt? You will not fail to perceive the effect of postponing the proposed action until January 1, 1863, if it be necessary at any time to depart from the well-defined policy of our Government in relation to cotton.

"October 31, 1862."

Mr. Randolph now directed the Commissary-General to report upon the practicability of delaying action on the offer, also called for an estimate of the probable receipts of the Subsistence Bureau under the existing arrangements. Colonel Northrop's reply was:

"Present efforts, even if successful, will not produce cured bacon by the first of January. The departments of the East have been exhausted, while the increasing numbers of refugees add to the consumers. The results hoped for from Tennessee are not probably equal to the demands of the troops on the west of the mountains and in Tennessee."

Several days later, no action having been taken meanwhile, I had an interview with General Randolph, who instructed me to send him a return of the stocks of meat on hand, which I did in a letter dated November 8th. This report General Randolph submitted to the President, thus indorsed:

"It appears from Major Ruffin's statement that the supply of hogs this year will be about one hundred thousand short of last year's supply, and that the supply of beef is well-nigh exhausted. Unless the deficiency be made up by purchases beyond the limits of the Confederacy, I apprehend serious consequences."

The paper was returned, with this indorsement from Mr. Davis:

"The question submitted is one which a constitutional adviser would advantageously bring to a conference. The papers inclosed, particularly the statement of bacon on hand, do not sustain the conclusion presented. To solve the question a statement from the C. G. S., and a comparative view based upon a return of the troops, will be necessary. The resources of every portion of the Confederacy must be considered to reach a just estimate."

In a report from the Commissary Department, on the 18th of November, this "comparative view" was given. It was not, however, based upon "a return of troops," for the Adjutant-General's office had never been able to furnish the requisite data. Three days later this report was returned, indorsed as follows by General G. W. Smith, Acting Secretary of War:

"Respectfully returned to the Commissary-General. The President requests that an estimate be made of the amount of supplies that can be procured from sources within the Confederate States from which last year we could procure none, and state more fully the reasons for immediate action, and consider the relative advantages of procuring supplies from Memphis, and from the vicinity of New Orleans."

The reply to this will be given in full, for it presents the whole case and cannot be condensed :

"*First.* Every source within the Confederate lines from which supplies could have been obtained last year or this has been fully explored. All such have either been exhausted or found inadequate. If in any small portion of the Confederacy supplies have not been aimed at, it was because it was known that such portion would not afford enough for the current domestic supply of that particular area. It has been erroneously supposed that Southern Georgia and Alabama, and certain portions of Florida, would afford large amounts of stock ; but they have not done it. They have not even fully fed those posts which, from geographical position, would naturally draw from them, and they cannot do as much in the future as they have done in the past.

"This appears abundantly from facts within my knowledge, and from testimony in the office.

"*Second.* To state more fully the reasons for immediate action, it is necessary to recapitulate :

"The report states a clear deficit of bacon of 8,116,194 pounds, or twenty-five per cent. ; a clear deficit in salt beef of 36,000 beeves, at an average of five hundred pounds per bullock—making 18,000,000 pounds, or ninety per cent. : whole value of the above, 22,516,194 rations. Total deficit per cent., forty-three.

"This calculation is upon the basis of the forces this year in camp and field. Further, it does not include immense supplies purchased from private hands, which cannot be had at all for the coming winter, because the stock to create them is not in the Confederate lines ; and the salt cannot be had if the stock could. Besides, large local supplies have been completely exhausted, as in Loudoun, Fauquier, and other districts. And even the above estimated subsistence is not at all secure. The hogs, though bargained for, have not all been driven to places of safety. The salt to cure them has not all been secured, and what has been engaged has not all been delivered, and must take its chances for transportation over long distances, upon uncertain roads discordantly connected. It is not safe, then, to rely on these estimates. Added to that, the winter is at hand ; the rises of the rivers all impending ; invasion on a vast scale is imminent ; the supplies which have been hoped for from the enemy's lines, by ordinary exertions, are not to be expected.

"The supplies now offered are ample, and are tendered at lower rates in cotton, even at the extreme bid, than they can be bought at for Confederate currency in our own lines. If not availed of now, they most probably never will be, for lack of power and opportunity. And finally, both Mobile and

Charleston are pressing for large supplies out of resources which must be held for the armies of Virginia, or the border States will be lost; while the same reserves, and the accumulations I have been endeavoring to make in Tennessee, are demanded by the armies of General Bragg.

"*Third.* As to the relative advantages of procuring supplies from Memphis and from the vicinity of New Orleans, the proposition to make such purchases is not a new idea. They were made at the commencement of the war to an extent which is little known. In an elaborate report on the operations of this Bureau, made by Major Ruffin, under my order and superintendence, and submitted to Congress in January last, it is stated: 'Experts estimate that the product of about 1,200,000 hogs was imported in the early part of last year (1861) from beyond our present lines into what is now the Southern Confederacy. This was accomplished by the action of State authorities, in some cases by the enterprise of private parties, and by this department through agencies of its own. Of this number, it is estimated that about 300,000 hogs, in their bacon equivalent, have been consumed by our State and Confederate armies since the commencement of hostilities. This was for a period of eight months, and shows a requirement of 450,000 hogs per annum. For a considerable part of that period the army was a mere fraction of the magnitude which it has reached. Those who think that the stimulus of high prices, under the apprehension of great scarcity, has so increased our supply of meat as to enable us to dispense with this large balance, forget that the counties most capable of such development are precisely those which have suffered most from the war. Elsewhere it must have been a new enterprise, such as could not be expected to succeed when the best men are in the army.'

"Therefore, I urge that supplies be engaged both from Memphis and from the vicinity of New Orleans, and for these additional reasons: It may be safely estimated that the army will consume and waste the product of not less than 500,000 hogs, of which we calculate to receive only about one-third from our Confederate limits. It will not be prudent to rely upon obtaining the amount needed from one single source of supply; it will be well to divide the risk. Moreover, other articles are needed nearly as much as meat. The salt-works in Louisiana are not to be depended on; the supply to be obtained from Saltville, in Virginia, is limited. The wants of citizens, daily becoming more urgent and alarming, will absorb all of that, if permitted, and the drafts of the Government upon the same fund will cause ruinous prices and great destitution.

"One reliable party in New Orleans offers to supply 100,000 sacks of salt, or more than is called for by the rapidly expiring contract at Saltville. Other articles—such as coffee and flour—are also offered from New Orleans. The supply of flour from that quarter will enable the soldiers from the South-west to use that in part as a bread ration instead of corn-meal, which must otherwise be their sole reliance for bread. The reserve of coffee for the sick is being rapidly consumed. No other prospect of getting more presents itself, but the necessity of a sufficiency is important. The success of the enterprise is doubtful, but the opportunity afforded by the venality of the enemy ought not to be lost. If we thereby obtain the use of the Mississippi from Memphis to New Orleans, until such time as the whole or a large part of the needed supplies shall have been obtained, it will be a great benefit.

"Its effect upon the *morale* of the enemy, and the political results of such a policy, however important in themselves, are questions which, as they have not entered into my calculation, I do not discuss. My action proceeds entirely from a sense of the absolute necessity of these supplies to feed the army, and to subdue the want which has already manifested itself both in General Lee's army and the Army of the West, under the privations to which they have been subjected.

Respectfully,

"L. B. NORTHPROP, C. G. S."

To this no official reply was ever received; no contract was made or permitted. Among the reasons which induced President Davis to withhold his assent were these: *First*. He judged that the Federal Government would become bankrupt if it could not obtain cotton. *Second*. He suspected that the enemy was seeking, under cover of a contract for supply, to ascertain the location and condition of certain of our defenses. *Third*. He held that the trade in cotton, on the part of the Government, would demoralize the people. *Fourth*. He feared lest, should we let cotton go out from the port of New Orleans, Europe might think that we had succumbed, and might therefore refuse to recognize us or to intervene.

But the necessity of obtaining meat from abroad was becoming daily more urgent, and it so happened that just about that time—November, 1862—Captain W. G. Crenshaw, a merchant of Richmond, was about to be sent to Europe on business for the Navy Department. The well-known fitness of Captain Crenshaw for that position, induced the Commissary-General to request of the Secretary of War that he might be permitted to use his services in obtaining supplies, especially of meat and coffee, through the blockade. A scheme was accordingly arranged, by which it was hoped that our deficiencies in subsistence might be supplied.

The plan was to support individual enterprise with Government capital, thus securing to the individuals the insurance of many ventures in the hazardous business of blockade-running, and to the Government the vigilance and intelligence of private parties. These private parties were to sell the cotton and purchase the return cargo, charging two and a half per cent. commission on each transaction; and the Government was to purchase the cotton on this side at a commission of two and a half per cent., with a reserved right to all the private freight room, at an agreed rate per ton, being two-thirds less than had been previously paid to other blockade-runners. On his arrival in England Captain Crenshaw made a contract for six vessels, but only five of them

were delivered. Two of these were lost on the coast of Cape Fear in coming in; two others were lost in their first attempt to come in; the fifth was captured on her fourth trip.

But during the spring and summer of 1863, great quantities of meat were shipped to Nassau and Bermuda by Mr. Crenshaw, for the Commissary Department. For some reason the Government agents in those islands neglected to tranship these stores for home, and most of them remained there until another line of steamers was started, in the following year. Of course the loss of meat by spoiling was enormous.

In consequence of these and similar failures, the army, especially in Virginia, was put on short rations—first, one-half pound of meat a day, then one-third; later, one-quarter of a pound. This meat was obtained partly by the tax in kind, partly from the scanty accumulations in the South, but almost entirely by purchases made at nominal prices under an odious impressment law, which has taxed the patriotism, liberality, and means of the people to the utmost limit of endurance.

And now, recourse was again had to the Mississippi River frontier. On the 18th December, 1863, a contract was proposed by a party who represented himself, and I think truly, to the Secretary of War, as having very extensive relations with the other side. The payment of the supplies was to be in cotton; the officer to receive and pay for them was ordered to that duty; and Lieutenant-General Polk was instructed by the Secretary of War to assist all the parties in executing the contract. But the agent of the Treasury Department, who alone could furnish the cotton, refused to coöperate, and the supplies had to be sent back. Another attempt at barter was made, but that time the whole cargo was confiscated by a military commander, and the contractor has ever since been vainly endeavoring to obtain payment for his goods.

A new line of steamers was started in the spring of 1864, by Crenshaw & Co. One of their vessels was lost on the coast of Ireland in coming out; another upon her second voyage. There remained two others, both very superior steamers, one or both of which had been paid for by advances made by Crenshaw & Co. Under the contract, the Government was obligated to furnish the whole cargo of cotton, but it failed to do so—indeed, it did not possess the means of transporting it to the sea-board. Accordingly, the Government was induced to sell one-fourth out of its three-

fourths interest in the steamers to the Supply Importing Company, composed of various railroad companies and persons interested in railroads. As this new contract provided for twelve steamers, it was hoped that some good result might at last be reached. But in the very inception of the enterprise the Government decided to take the *Atlanta*, the best vessel of the fleet, for a cruiser. In vain did the company protest; in vain did they represent the embarrassment to which they would be subjected, in meeting their obligations to the English ship-builders, if the vessels by which cotton was to be shipped were seized. They urged that at the least two thousand bales of cotton might be shipped by other vessels to Mr. Crenshaw. But only one thousand bales were sent, after considerable delay, of which only three hundred and ninety-six reached Bermuda. Though the *Atlanta* was, by disinterested experts, appraised at £46,500, the Government would only pay £25,000—that is, £12,500 to the private parties. But notwithstanding the seizure of the *Atlanta*, and the fact that, except the three hundred and ninety-six bales of cotton, the Government never assisted the enterprise by the slightest advance, other vessels were built and paid for by the credit of the private parties, and by receipts of cotton from those successively put on the line; and these vessels have brought to Wilmington three times as much subsistence as all the vessels that sail under the regulations.

In January, 1864, a contract was made with Wm. J. Stoddard, permitting him to barter cotton for meat in the region of the Tennessee River. Upon making this contract, Colonel Northrop requested Mr. Memminger to turn over to him three thousand bales of cotton, which the Treasury held at Memphis. This the contractor could have exchanged for cotton nearer the Tennessee. But Mr. Memminger refused, and so the enterprise lagged till last fall, when Mr. Stoddard dispatched from Marion, Alabama, for the Tennessee, a train of wagons, loaded with cotton. But the train was seized by the scouts of General Daniel Adams, taken back to Marion, and there held. This proceeding was reported to the Secretary of War, who afforded no redress.

On the 5th December, I brought the condition of things to the attention of the Secretary of War, appending a statement of the subsistence on hand, which showed that we had *nine* days' rations for General Lee's army. I quoted General Lee's letter to the Commissary-General, that day received, in which he stated

that his men were deserting on account of short rations. But no action was taken. On December 14th, nine days afterward, General Lee telegraphed Mr. Davis that his army was without meat. Fortunately, disaster was momentarily averted by the timely arrival of supplies at Wilmington in the Crenshaw and Power, Lowe & Co. steamers. The Navy Department also turned over to us three hundred thousand pounds of meat which they had accumulated at Charlotte; and Governor Vance gave up to us nearly all the meat he had collected in his State for the families of soldiers and the employés of his Government.

During the whole period of the efforts to put the question of meat supply from abroad upon a proper footing, the meat in the limits of the Confederacy was constantly reduced in amount.

The well-known effects of a depreciating currency in causing supplies to be hoarded, rendered it necessary to impress them. This mode was legalized by acts of Congress, which failed, however, to enforce it by penalties. In some States, the feeling against the law has rendered it almost inoperative, and in many, judicial, gubernatorial, or legislative action has practically nullified it. Under the rapid depreciation of our currency, to impress supplies on tender of the merely nominal price fixed in the several States by the commissioners of appraisement, is regarded by the people as the levying of an unjust and tyrannical tax. But, on the other hand, if the Government be required to pay what is called market rates, the effect on the currency may well cause anxiety.

On the 6th November, 1863, an order was issued by the Secretary of War, that no supplies held by a citizen for his own consumption, or that of his employés or slaves, should be impressed, and that "no officer should at any time, unless specially ordered so to do by a general commanding, in a case of exigency, impress supplies which are on their way to market for sale on arrival." This may have been a proper order, but on November 14th, Major B. P. Noland, Chief Commissary for the State of Virginia, addressed a letter in regard to it to the Commissary-General, of which this is an extract:

"The construction given to that order has filled the land with purchasers; private individuals, railroad companies, manufacturers of all kinds, corporations of every class, relief associations of cities, towns, and counties, are personally, or by their agents, in the market buying a year's supply, unlimited as to price and protected from impressment. Speculators are also at work,

whose purchases are, of course, always *in transitu*, and they are also protected. This sudden influx of purchasers into the market has stimulated the cupidity of producers and holders of the necessities of life, and has induced them to withhold their supplies, and has already raised the prices of all the prime articles fully one hundred per cent. within the past month. These are facts, and, in view of them, I ask, Is it surprising that our returns from purchasing officers for the past month show that they have done almost nothing? Our officers cannot buy; nor is it reasonable to expect parties to sell to the Government at schedule price, when double that price is offered at their door by others. They cannot impress, for holders have with great promptness contracted for all their supplies with parties who pay them higher prices, and thus it has as naturally as surely happened that our regular supplies have been cut off. This is especially the case with meat.

"We have received scarcely any by purchase or impressment, and have fed the troops, hospitals, etc., solely from our depots. The supplies there are now much reduced, and can last but a few weeks longer. When that supply is exhausted, our soldiers will be without meat.

"I cannot undertake to propose a remedy for this condition of things; but much good would, in my opinion, be done by a total rescission of that order, or by such modification of it as will only protect from the impressment such supplies as are bought at schedule rates, or by abolishing all the restrictions which the schedule imposes on the Government officer.

"If discrimination cannot be made in favor of the soldier who, without shelter, is fighting our battles, at least put him on an equal footing in this matter of supplies with the private citizen who, with a roof above him, can better stand a short allowance of food."

On December 5th he writes again to the same effect, and states that the army of Northern Virginia had then only four days' supply of fresh beef—reduced rations at that.

To make up this deficiency, resort was had at once to the requisition of the green pork due under the tax in kind law, and to contracts for beef to be obtained from without our lines. By January 8th, the Secretary of War was compelled to order the purchase of meat without regard to impressment rates, which were again restored when a small surplus had been obtained. Since that time, the supply of cattle for the army of Northern Virginia, with the exception of about fifteen hundred head obtained from South-western Virginia, has all come from beyond our lines, and has in most cases been paid for in greenbacks or gold. Much of these supplies have been permanently cut off by the ravage of the valley and of Loudoun and Fauquier. Whether it will be possible to make up the deficiency thus created by supplies from North-western Virginia, is not certainly known. But supposing the money to be in hand, it can hardly be expected that the movement of not less than a thousand or fifteen hundred bul-

locks per month from that region will fail to attract the attention of the enemy. Should it be determined to give up Richmond, the difficulty of this branch of supply will probably be increased.

The amount due from bonded farmers and exempts in Virginia is one million pounds each of beef and bacon, of which all the beef has been paid in, and some of the bacon, at twenty-five per cent. deduction, according to law. As efforts are making to commute a good deal of the balance, and a portion of it has already been paid in beef, and as many parties, from the ravages of the enemy, diseases among their hogs and cattle, and from drought, will be unable to pay, it cannot be safely estimated what can be obtained from that source; but half a million pounds can only furnish rations for General Lee's army for fifteen days.

But little need be said of bread. Under the same difficulties that have beset the obtaining of meat, it has been obtained and fed to the army in a quantity which, if enough for life, certainly does not satisfy the appetites of the men. In Virginia, the supply of breadstuffs is exhausted, and but little more can be expected, even after the next wheat comes in. Much of the last crop was necessarily used by the farmers, who made very short corn crops under the joint effects of freshets and droughts. The present corn crop is no better, probably worse, than the last. Add to this the destruction of whole districts by Federal armies, the effect of calling out the whole reserve force, and subsequently of putting into the field or in camp all detailed farmers, at the period of seeding wheat, and the absconding of negroes under the fear of being placed in our armies, and it is apparent that no bread can be expected from Virginia. There is enough in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi; its procurement depends upon the ability to command money and transportation.

It has been a constant cause of embarrassment to the Subsistence Bureau, that in only two cases has it ever been officially notified of proposed military movements of importance; hence, it has been unable to meet the necessities of campaigns. But when it became apparent that the army must be subsisted from within the Confederate lines, the plan was adopted of appointing for each State a chief commissary, with proper officers and agents under him in the several districts into which the State was divided. It was arranged that there should be monthly reports of purchases and impressments, and estimates of future accumulations, and semi-monthly reports of material on hand at the vari-

ous posts and depots. But this plan was defeated by the conscription of our best men, if they happened to be able-bodied.

An obstacle nearly as great as lack of funds has been the deficiency of means of transportation, both by wagon and rail. This subject engaged the attention of the Bureau as soon as the Government was established in Richmond. This I know from having been consulted by the Commissary-General on the transportation problem, a few days after his arrival. I at once took him to a certain president of a railroad company, who had given the subject much study, and who had projected a through freight schedule from New Orleans to Richmond. With that gentleman he visited the Quartermaster-General, who did not approve the plan. From that time till now there have been constant failures in that branch of the service; many a time has the army been in danger of starvation, and the efforts of the Commissary-General have been unflagging to prevent disaster from that cause. On this head suffice it to say, that his letter-book has been examined somewhat hastily, and that the examination shows thirty cases in which he treated the subject of transportation, at greater or less length, in letters and indorsements. Of these, seventeen were addressed to the Secretary of War, one to General Lee, and one to General Bragg. I have myself been witness of several conversations on this subject between the Commissary-General and the Secretary of War, in which he pressed this point with pertinacity. He had reason for the interest thus manifested.

Five times before the 14th of December, 1864, had General Lee's army been reduced to one or two days' rations from want of transportation. On the 2d May, two days before the battles of last spring commenced, there were but two days' rations for his army in this city. On the 23d June, when the Federal Generals Wilson and Kautz cut the Danville Railroad, which was not repaired for twenty-three days, we had only thirteen days' rations on hand for General Lee's army, and to feed it we had to offer market rates for wheat, thereby incurring an excess of expenditure which, if paid for corn and transportation, would have moved ten millions of bread rations from Augusta to Richmond.

The Federal prisoners, whose removal to a more abundant country, where they might get their supplies on the spot, the Commissary-General had repeatedly requested, were not removed until the spring of 1864, when they had consumed our entire reserve of thirty thousand barrels of flour. General Lee had

urged the importance of having at least thirty days' reserve here, or here and at Lynchburg, and it was a duty to meet his wishes. The Commissary-General repeatedly offered suggestions for the improvement of the transportation service. One plan proposed by him was very simple. It was to stop all passenger trains, and, if necessary, all private freight trains, until the Government freight should have been brought on. In January, 1864, the Secretary of War had promised that this would be done, but the order was not given till March or April. At once Government freight poured in, and in two weeks we had more subsistence on hand than we had accumulated before in any one month. But in a very short time the order was revoked, and we relapsed into our former state as to transportation. Ever since it has been growing worse. It is proper to say that the President has been made aware of the condition of the commissariat by advices forwarded directly from this Bureau.

F. G. RUFFIN.